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For Immediate Release  
April 17, 2015

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## **Sanfelippo looks to increase funding to hire more police**

MADISON, Wis. – Milwaukee has been rocked with a substantial amount of violence in recent days, with seven homicides recorded in a nearly 48-hour period.

But a bill proposed by state Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, R-New Berlin, could go a long way in helping curb violent crimes in Milwaukee and other municipalities in Wisconsin.

Sanfelippo's legislation builds upon the state's current Law Enforcement Officer Grants program by increasing overall funding, expanding the list of eligible applicants to include county sheriff's departments and removing the minimum size requirement for eligible municipalities.

The current program, administered by the state Department of Justice, provides annual grants to 10 eligible cities that have populations of at least 25,000. The department may not award annual grants in excess of \$150,000 to any one city, and those funds must be used to employ additional uniformed law enforcement officers whose primary duties are beat patrolling. The 10 cities shared \$1,224,900 in 2013-14.

Sanfelippo's proposal would increase the overall grant funding to \$16 million by making cuts to other programs.

"No new spending is desired, so only funds equal to the amount of accepted cuts will be allocated for the increased funding," Sanfelippo said. "By prioritizing our spending and continuing to look for ways to run a more effective and efficient government, we can give our local law enforcement officers a helping hand in keeping our citizens safe without busting the budget."

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, while speaking at a news conference earlier this week, partially pointed the finger at Gov. Scott Walker and the Legislature for the escalating violence in Milwaukee by passing laws that put "more guns on the streets."

Milwaukee Police Chief Ed Flynn also has blamed the violence on “career criminals out there lawfully carrying (concealed carry) permits because our current law permits that.”

But as 1130 WISN radio talk show host Dan O’Donnell pointed out in an open letter to Flynn, only one CCW permit holder out of the more than 220,000 in the state has been convicted of a homicide since Wisconsin’s concealed carry law was passed in 2011.

And under Barrett’s leadership, the Milwaukee Police Department is understaffed by 200 to 300 officers and is furloughed at a rate equivalent to 48,000 man-hours per year, according to Milwaukee Police Association President Mike Crivello.

Crivello said in a statement he believes a fully-staffed police force could have made a difference in Milwaukee’s recent murders.

“Our police officers are overtasked, while expected to perform duties of vacant positions — these officers are forced to work without partners, which puts them at great risk, delays in response time and ultimately jeopardizes the safety of the entire community,” Crivello said in a statement.

Milwaukee has reported 43 homicides so far this year, up 29 from this same time in 2014. Barrett acknowledged the city has not seen the same level of violence since the first quarter of 2000.

Sanfelippo’s proposed bill also would supplement the H.O.P.E. package passed by last year that aims to help people suffering from drug additions. Under Sanfelippo’s legislation, the grants also could be used to employ specialized law enforcement officers.

“The growing popularity of narcotic and prescription drug abuse, including heroin use, is an epidemic that has had tragic results throughout our entire state,” Sanfelippo said. “As this troubling drug problem spreads, some individuals turn to crime as a means of raising money to pay for their habit. Crime is no longer a problem concentrated primarily in large urban settings.”

The number of heroin cases processed by the Wisconsin State Crime Lab has increased from 648 in 2012 to 1,130 in 2014, according to the state DOJ. Heroin-related deaths in Milwaukee County jumped by 72 percent from 2013 to last year, data released by the Milwaukee County medical examiner’s office shows.

For the second year in a row in Milwaukee County, more people died in heroin-related incidents than vehicle crashes.

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